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Message Text

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12
ACTION EA-06

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 0649

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: CVIS PFOR KS KN
SUBJECT: VISAS FOR NORTH KOREANS

REF: A STATE 21472; B STATE 17996

1. POLITICAL COUNSELOR JAN 30 INFORMED MOFA AMERICAN BUREAU DIRECTOR YI SANG-OK OF US INTENTION TO ISSUE VISAS TO NORTH KOREAN REPRESENTATIVES TO ATTEND 14 TH INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF HISTORICAL SCIENCES. EMBASSY OFFICER DREW ON TALKING POINTS IN REFTEL (B), UNDERLINING THAT THIS MOVE INDICATED NO CHANGE IN GENERAL VISA POLICY TOWARD NORTH KOREA, BUT RESULTED FROM NEED TO MAINTAIN SUITABILITY OF US AS SITE FOR SUCH CONFERENCES.

2. DIRECTOR YI SAID THAT HE HAD JUST RECEIVED ROK EMBASSY REPORT ON DEPARTMENT'S APPROACH ON THIS SUBJECT. HE SAID THAT QUESTION OF NORTH KOREAN ATTENDANCE AT INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES IN US HAD ALSO ARISEN IN SUMMER OF 1974 (HE WAS NOT SURE OF DATE) IN CONNECTION WITH WHO/FAO CONFERENCE HELD IN WASHINGTON. AT THAT TIME, YI SAID, IN EXPLAINING USG DECISION TO PERMIT REPRESENTATIVE OF NORTH KOREAN OBSERVER DELEGATION AT UN TO ATTEND THIS CONFERENCE, DEPARTMENT HAD POINTED OUT THAT, GIVEN NK MEMBERSHIP IN WHO AND
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UN CONNECTION OF BOTH WHO AND FAO, USG COULD NOT PROHIBIT

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NK ATTENDANCE. YI REMARKED THAT JUSTIFICATION FOR INTENTION TO ISSUE VISAS IN CONNECTION WITH HISTORICAL CONFERENCE AND SUBSEQUENT SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE AND SPORT CHAMPIONSHIPS DID NOT MENTION UN INVOLVEMENT AND THUS SEEMED TO BE AN ADDITIONAL WEAKENING OF US POLICY ON VISAS FOR NORTH KOREANS. POLITICAL COUNSELOR SAID THAT JUSTIFICATION WAS BASICALLY THE SAME IN ALL CASES AND WAS AIMED AT MAINTAINING SUITABILITY OF US AS SITE FOR IMPORTANT INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS AND EVENTS. HE REPEATED THAT GENERAL POLICY ON VISAS WAS UNCHANGED.

3. YI REITERATED THE ROKG VIEW THAT THE USG, IN ISSUING VISAS TO NORTH KOREANS, SHOULD NOT OUTPACE THE SOVIETS IN THEIR ISSUANCE OF VISAS TO ROK CITIZENS. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE SOVIETS HAD INDEED ISSUED A NUMBER OF VISAS TO ROK CITIZENS BUT SAID THAT THERE SEEMED TO BE NO CLEAR-CUT SOVIET POLICY ON THIS AND THE ROKG COULD NOT COUNT ON VISA ISSUANCE IN ANY GIVEN INSTANCE REGARDLESS OF THE PURPOSE OF PROPOSED VISIT.
COMMENT: DIRECTOR YI WAS OBVIOUSLY UNHAPPY OVER OUR INTENTION TO ISSUE VISAS TO NORTH KOREANS IN THESE INSTANCES. ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT SPECIFICALLY SAY SO, HE CLEARLY IMPLIED CONCERN THAT OUR INTEREST IN BEING HOST TO INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES AND SPORTING EVENTS WOULD RESULT IN MORE LENIENT VISA POLICY FOR NORTH KOREANS THAN SOVIETS WOULD HAVE VIS-A-VIS ROK.
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